

**Booming Business for Aging Boomers**

As the post-war babies of the 1940s, ‘50s, and ‘60s move past middle age and into their golden years, marketing to Baby Boomers is becoming a booming business.

Boomers are reaching senior status with more excess income than previous generations, and the business world is beginning to recognize seniors as a viable demographic for focused marketing.

“There are 24 million ‘Zoomers’ [active Boomers trying to maintain healthy aging] in the first wave [52 to 62 years old], and they are more active and more affluent than any generation before them,” says Dr. Dan Novak, assistant professor for the Master of Science in Leadership program for South University Online. “Another 22 million Boomers are following close behind in the second wave, and the combined groups command two thirds of the nation's household wealth. Of the 46 million Boomers, about 25% of them have annual incomes of $100,000 or more and a net worth of $400,000 or more. The Boomers are affluent and active, only 11% of baby Boomers face health problems that restrict their lifestyle. In addition, Boomers are accustomed to spending money on lifestyle, services, and amenities.”

**Marketing to Baby Boomers on the Internet**

Because of this excess income, good health, and active lifestyles, Boomers are being pursued by companies looking for ways to connect with them, especially using the internet.

“Our clients want to know where to find seniors online, and how to connect with them,” says Dave Weigelt, partner and chief marketing strategist at Immersion Active, Inc.

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Immersion Active is an interactive marketing agency that helps companies connect directly with the Boomers and bridges the gap between today's business community and a generation that grew up without the internet.

“Now they’re getting it and being engaged in different ways,” Weigelt says about Boomers becoming web savvy.

Novak agrees that the internet is the best new way to connect with Boomers.

“Although the Boomers did not grow up with technology, the internet has been used to tap into the Boomer market,” Novak says. “As the Boomers invested in hot technology markets, and produced goods and services that were consumed by technology producers, they became informed about internet/technology and they then supported the internet marketplace with their purchasing dollars.”

“Marketing tactics are more sophisticated and content laden” Novak adds about marketing on the internet. “Answers and insights are available to consumers at the speed of the keyboard, so fraudulent marketing and ‘one-time offers’ have lost their credibility.”

Although this higher-quality marketing material is changing the way seniors are approached on the internet, Weigelt says there is a fine line between using the technology to touch peoples’ lives and using it to invade peoples’ privacy, and it is very important for businesses not to come across as overly pushy when connecting with seniors on the web.

President and owner of Senior Marketing Solutions Karen Hodge agrees that Boomers do not want to be pushed by marketers, but would rather be involved, interact with the companies approaching them, and eventually make a decision based on this interaction.
“It’s important to them to be involved and have a very active part and knowing that they have a voice,” Hodge says. “This is very important to them.”

“They want choices. They definitely want choices,” Hodge adds.

Having these choices gives Boomers the ability to make informed decisions that they feel good about.

“They love to be able to chart their own course,” Weigelt says.

Novak says some businesses are straddling the line between invasion and interaction, but as they focus more on marketing to specific demographics in the ways that demographic wants to be approached, these businesses will have increased success.

“Although many [Boomers] are concerned about the ‘Big Brother Effect,’ Boomers, and all generations, are attracted to customized marketing that understands ‘our needs, wants, and desires,’” Novak says. “As producers of goods and services subtly increase their understanding of individual purchasers, Boomers will gently succumb to the presence of ‘in my head’ marketing. Personalized marketing, knowing what I want and when I want it, provides value to busy Boomers. As Boomers grow accustomed to the infiltration into my lifestyle and purchasing habits, the obvious value provided by a customized approach will [become the norm and feel less intrusive to Boomers]. Mass marketing will appear bland, somewhat ignorant, and passé.”

**The Real Needs of the Baby Boom Generation**

Although there is a real sense of vibrancy, vitality, and independence within the Boomer population, the fact of the matter is they are aging, and they are going to have to spend an increasing portion of their excess income on making themselves comfortable, safe, and healthy. These needs drive a lot of marketing for Boomers.

“The reason that seniors are such great consumers is that they have serious needs, whether it is housing or health, that they cannot avoid,” Weigelt says.

For the Boomers, that means big bucks when expendable income meets comfort, safety, and healthcare. “The Boomers have always had high expectations,” Hodge says. “They’ve always had the availability of quality options.”

“And we expect the best,” she adds.

For Boomer marketers like Weigelt and Hodge the next few years will be bright, you could even call them golden, as more and more Boomers with inflated incomes move into the next stage of their lives.

“We have never had a group this big go into the fall and winter of their lives,” Weigelt says. “It’s going to be different.”